

love to many, as his 'Thesaurus' has been to him; and whether reflecting, however dimly, the processes of evolution, or the results of direct creation, this hoped-for reproduction of Silurian life in all its bearings, in both an analytic and a synthetic form, will be a work worth any man's labour, adding to useful knowledge, and enlarging our conceptions of the ways and means of Nature and of the grandeur and perfection of her Creator.

MISCELLANEOUS.

Birds in the Philadelphia Museum. By Dr. J. E. GRAY.

THE collection of stuffed birds formed by Mr. Wilson, and presented to the Museum of the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, is a very large one. Dr. Harvey, the algologist, in his letters just published in his 'Life,' which give the most lifelike and interesting account of the country, and especially the great centres, and of the scientific and literary men of the United States that I have read, observes, Dr. Leidy "accompanied me over the museum, the collection of birds in which is said to be the first in the world. Agassiz and the Prince Canino, both good authorities, say there is no such single cabinet in Europe" (p. 195).

Having purchased the collection that formed the basis of the Museum in Philadelphia, for Mr. Wilson, I may give an account of how it was procured, more especially as it will show at what a moderate rate a large and beautiful collection may be obtained, and the manner in which such things are managed in France.

Mr. Wilson called on me as a stranger, saying that he wished to make a collection of birds, and that he had received an offer from a dealer who had mentioned my name, and he wished to know if I considered the price fair, and if the vendor was likely to carry out his engagements. The price proposed was a progressive one—three shillings per specimen for the first two hundred skins, four shillings for the next two hundred, the price increasing with each succeeding hundred, making the rarer birds very high. After some conversation, and finding that he wanted it for the Academy of Natural Sciences of Philadelphia, of which I am a member, I said, if he wanted to form a museum, why did he not try to purchase a collection, as there were several in the market? I mentioned two or three, among the others Prince Masséna's collection in Paris. I said that it had been long for sale, and that I believed it could be purchased for a very moderate price—probably four francs (about 3s. 6d.) each specimen, which is the price that birds cost to be stuffed only. He said he had inquired about that collection, but it was not to be obtained for twenty times that sum, and indeed he doubted if it was to be purchased at all. A printed catalogue of the collection having been circulated, it was easily known what the amount would be at the price I named. I said that I intended to go to Paris in a very short time, and that, if he liked it, I would see what could be done.

In a few days he called again, and asked me if I really was willing to undertake the commission, and if I believed I could obtain it at the sum I had named. I said I thought I might, and would try; on which he sent me an order on Messrs. Green, the bankers in Paris, for double the amount I should require, according to the printed catalogue, and said, if necessary, I might use the whole sum. On my arrival in Paris, I put up at Meurice's, and at once sent a messenger with a note to the Prince Masséna, saying that I was willing to purchase the collection of birds at the rate of four francs per specimen, and that I was prepared to pay for it in ready money. While sitting at dinner at the *table d'hôte*, an aide-de-camp came in, all green and gold, with a cocked hat and a large white feather, to inquire for me, with a message from the Prince to inquire what I intended by ready money, and, when I explained, to inquire if I was ready to pay the sum that evening. I said no, that I had only just arrived in Paris, and had not delivered my letter of credit to the banker, but I would be ready to pay as soon as the bank opened the next morning. He said the bank opened early, and would I come to the prince at seven o'clock? to which I assented. I immediately sent my letter of credit to Messrs. Green, and mentioned the sum that I should draw for early the next morning. I kept my appointment; the prince met me, declared the collection agreed with the catalogue, on which I gave his highness a cheque on Messrs. Green; and he gave me a receipt and handed me the keys of the cases, and I sealed them up, the affair being settled in a few minutes.

Having finished my work sooner than I expected, and it still being early, I went to call on my dear old friend Prof. De Blainville, and had breakfast with him. He asked what had brought me to Paris. I said, among other things, to purchase the Prince Masséna's Collection of Birds, which I had done; on which he became much excited, and said that the French Government had intended to purchase it, and that he must take measures to prevent its leaving France. I said I was not aware that the Government wanted it, for I knew it had been for several years in the market, and it was now too late, as I had paid for the collection, which was now in my possession; and I showed him the keys of the cases and the receipt for the money. At length my good and kind friend became pacified. I then sent to an English dealer residing at Dieppe to come and pack the collection for exportation to the United States, as Mr. Wilson wished me to do if I succeeded in getting it.

It soon became buzzed about Paris that I had bought the collection; and I had applications from several dealers to pack it, and remonstrances from others for having made the bargain myself, and not through them: they said that if I had employed them, I could have got it for the same price, and they have obtained a good profit out of it!

Mr. Wilson was much pleased with the purchase, and afterwards purchased the cases, in which the birds were retained, and the specimens of the parrots that were not contained in the catalogue. On my return from Paris, Mr. Wilson sent me a very complimentary

letter containing a cheque for £50, which I returned to him, observing that there were duplicate specimens of certain birds in the collection that we had not in the British Museum, and that I should be pleased if he would let the Museum have them, which he most readily acceded to.

The collection was a very large and good one, but it has one fault common to most French collections; that is to say, the bird-stuffers constantly pull off the feathers, and replace them, with gum, so as to give the body a smooth appearance, and they are not always careful to put the feathers into the parts from which they were extracted. Until I saw the operation in the French laboratories I could not understand why some figures of birds in French works, and some descriptions of species taken from specimens in French museums, are said, as in Wagler's 'Systema Avium,' not to be quite true to nature.

Genera of Gorgoniadæ. By PROFESSOR VERRILL.

Professor Verrill, in a paper on the Corals and Polypes of the west coast of America, in the first volume of the 'Transactions of the Connecticut Academy,' p. 385, proposes to divide the family *Gorgoniadæ* into genera according to the spicules, thus:—

1. *Gorgonia*, with spindles in the cœnenchyma and an external layer of peculiar small club-shaped spicules, producing a smooth surface. Type *G. verrucosa*. Professor Verrill says this genus is very nearly allied to *Eunicea*.

2. *Pterogorgia*. The spicules in the cœnenchyma small, with double spindles, and also crescent- or bracket-shaped; they are nearly smooth on the convex side. Type *P. âcerosa*.

3. *Eugorgia*, with longer and shorter double spindles and numerous double wheels; surface decidedly granulous with naked spicules. Type *E. ampla*.

4. *Litigorgia*, having only the two forms of double spindles; surface somewhat granulous, but less so than in the last. Type *L. Floræ*.

He proposes to divide the genera into groups according to the branching of the coral, which M. Valenciennes used as a generic character.

Lamarck's Collection of Shells. By DR. J. E. GRAY.

Lamarck, in his work on Invertebrated Animals, described some of the species of shells from specimens in his own cabinet, and others from examples in the Museum of the Jardin des Plantes. This naturalist, who had a most wonderful faculty of perceiving natural groups and their relation to each other, and certainly was one of the most industrious of the votaries of natural science (for he not only published on zoology and botany, but on other branches of science), in his old age became blind, and so reduced in circumstances that when I saw him he was living in a very small room, with scarcely any furniture, on the stair leading to the library of the museum, chiefly supported by the labours of his daughters, who were employed to